

A Conceptual Framework of Management Practice for PMO and UAE Public Sectors

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Abstract

The contemporary human operations have changed fundamentally due to the introduction and the advancement in technology. Project management is always a challenging phase for organizations who look forward for exemplary advancements in operations. However, too many projects fail to meet their multiple objectives of time, cost, quality, scope and stakeholder expectations. The establishment of the Project Management Offices has gained critical acceptance all around the globe due to the inputs it has on the process of project execution. For this article, main research concerns is focus on the some of PMO frameworks and its impact on project based and non-project based organizations in UAE. The main purpose of the present study is to shed light on the functions of a PMO and the framework that could support the public sector organizations in the UAE in accomplishing their mission with the stakeholder satisfaction within the defined time period. In this research, a conceptual framework is developed to examine the alignment of configuration dimensions or arrangements of the PMO needed to exploit the various potential features and benefits to the project management. The implications for researchers and practitioners of the presented framework are also discussed.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive market, organizations strive to not only accomplish the projects on time but also consider the satisfaction of the stakeholders. The impulse for introducing a separate entity or departments for the project management within the organization is often a desire to improve the management of projects and to reduce the projects that fail to fill the ambitions of customers and stakeholders due to budget overruns or unacceptable delays [1]. The existence of a PMO has become necessary for organizations in both the public and private sectors whose core activities are project-based [2]. Because the this project management unit can interact actively in the host organization with a project and a business environment, it is responsible for improving the project management capabilities of the host organization [3]

However, nowadays, the benefits of an independent project management entity are utilized by both project based and non-project based

organizations. The wide acceptance and the impact of this office on the success factors of the projects contribute to this. It has been noticed that most of the project failures are due to the lack of coordination and proper planning. Requirement analysis, resource allocation, work plan, implementation and corrective actions are the basic steps of a project implementation [4]. Lack of awareness, training, alignment and accountability are the considered main challenges that the PMO establishment in UAE is facing which will be discussed in detail in the coming sections. The failure in risk forecasting and management also create a barrier for effective project implementation [5]. Generally speaking, if all these processes are executed in an appropriate way, the success rate of the project can be elevated to a high extent. In UAE, the concept of independent office for projects has been established earlier but the responsibilities were not properly structured. It has been noticed that there is a lack of vast literature based on the PMO in the public sectors in UAE.

The advancement in the application of technology in the public sector in UAE necessitates the change of tact regarding how projects are managed to foster excellence in the nation's economic path [6]. In essence, the public sector seeks to execute projects in a manner that cooperates with sub-governmental departments and fostering public-private partnerships. The pursuit is based on the urge to deliver projects using one-stop entities where everything can be done from one roof with the aim of improving collaboration. A study argues that the public entities are the main economic players in UAE such that they have abundant resources to the extent that they can use management approaches established in Asian countries such as Japan [7]-[10].

The recent vigorous expansion in infrastructure, core public utilities and related services has instigated project-based public organizations in the UAE [12]. This emergence of a new form of public organization has led to the adoption of advanced management approaches, which has prompted an intensive study of the practices of strategic management in UAE public sector organizations as they carry out their projects[13].

Developing public projects is considered as a great challenge. They require much time for the implementation and great ability to manage them, using such typical methods as planning, procurement, monitoring, and control. Unlike private companies, these factors do not proved as much effective in public entities ([14]. The basic concept of this study is that the PMO when properly implemented helps public sector organizations in managing their business projects.

However, there has been limited number of works that systematically study on the PMO frameworks development regarding of these issues. Gaining top performance by using PMO becomes one of the most urgent issues to cultivate the good working system culture to gain a good understanding of their communities

Therefore, in this study, the public sectors from different background will be evaluated in term of the impact, function and role of PMO in management. It

would add value in establishing better understanding of PMO in management practice that would strengthen the government initiative in shaping the public sectors specifically in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The approach adopted for this research is the mixed method that includes collecting, analysing and interpreting data using both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to attempt to answer a research question.

The quantitative research is used to calculate or quantify the research problem by transforming the collected data into usable statistics. Qualitative research is generally an exploratory technique, used to obtain overall understanding, reasons and opinions of experts (specialized people who are aware about the objective of the study).

A. Data Collection

In order to conduct the study both primary and secondary data collection methods are adopted. In the primary phase the questionnaire method is used and for secondary methods research literature review of different authors along with review of industry report is carried out. After preparing the survey questionnaire, it is administered to sampled participants using Survey Online data collection platform. The use of online data collection platform to conduct the survey will help reduce errors, manage the cost of data collection and lead to more efficient data collection exercise. Hence it could examine the impact of PMO implementation in the public sectors. The research also tries to analyses which PMO model is better or effective for UAE government sectors.

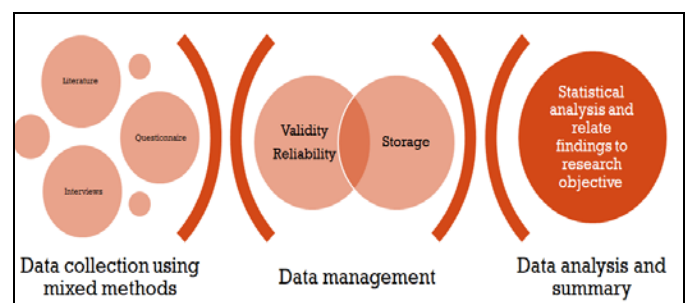


Fig 1: The Research Design

B. Data Analysis

For the quantitative data, the questionnaire is planned to distribute to a total of 350 respondents and expecting at least 300 responses. The questionnaires are administered to workers who work at public sectors and are sent through social media applications, web link, messages and emails. The data is collected in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) application software for conducting various statistical and analytical tests such as cross tabulation, factor analysis and multiple regression analysis.

SPSS analysis is very helpful to do correlation and regressions test that could determine the correlation co-efficient among the variables defined in the questionnaire. Chi Square tests, Anova tests and other regression analysis are done in order to answer the research questions and hypotheses. Multiple regression analysis is used to determine the relationship between the roles of PMO and the project execution triad in the study area. The helps to analyse the relationship between a dependent variable and several independent variables. Similarly, the simple linear regression analysis is also used to determine the effect of PMO on public sectors organization in the study area. The multiple regression models are used in this research as an exploratory tool, and not for the usual purpose to predict values based on a sample of data but to assess the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

For the qualitative research, the feedbacks that are collected as audio recordings and write ups are stored in soft copies in the system. As the interview count is comparatively less, each interview can be analysed separately and the core contents are sorted out. The relevant points are then related to the research objective. The main output from interviews are expected as the existing PMO practices in UAE. A wide knowledge about the PMO models and roles in UAE sectors are also explored. This helps to analyse the better PMO model and to propose the effective model with add on features.

The qualitative data analysis is a step by step process. The audio recordings and the notes made

during meetings and interviews are first converted into interview transcripts. As the questionnaire contains semi-structured questions, not all the interview feedbacks have the same content. Even though, the main challenge is to avoid repetition of similar feedbacks.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW (PREVIOUS FRAMEWORK)

Different scholars have fronted different frameworks that could be used in the process of establishing Project Management Office. These frameworks are as discussed onwards based on the authors that developed them.

A. Framework by Bolles and Hubbard

Bolles and Hubbard (2015) develop a framework known as the Project Business Management Framework. However, the use of term Project Business Management does not mean that the framework applies to organizations that undertake businesses; instead, it focuses on providing a framework that can be used to handle the project-related businesses for any entity in question. As such, this framework is credibly appropriate for analysis in this particular review although the research focuses on public organizations which seek to deliver civil services as opposed to private business engagements. In essence, it focuses on general aspects of projects that are critical to all organizations regardless of their functions and the nature of the people who are served. In this particular case, they represent their framework as shown in the figure below.

In light of the above framework, they indicate that at the stages of strategic planning, objective stipulation, initiation, and support provision, the project managers can effectively ensure that almost 80% of the project results will be achieved successfully. This grants the need for developing a framework necessary to operate the PMOs. Therefore, Bolles and Hubbard (2015) provide an exhibit containing several key pillars of the PBM framework which should be used in the process of setting up PMOs. This framework is as shown in the

figure 6 below. The framework incorporates the pillars which they believe are critical in the process of achieving the sustainability of project management within an organization. The inclusion of the term sustainability, in this particular discussion, is fundamentally vital because it points

back to the welfare of the organization as a whole bearing in mind that it is in the best interest of an entity to remain in existence and continue improving in performance for the sake of the persons that it serves.

Project Business Management	PBM Organization					Operations Business Management	OBM Organization						
PBM Model <i>Project Management</i> Integration & Harmonization	Governance	Methodology	Capability	Planning	Execution	Sustainability	OBM Model <i>Operations Management</i> Integration & Harmonization	Governance	Methodology	Capability	Planning	Execution	Sustainability
	Organizational PBM								Organizational Management				
Management of Strategies						Management of Strategies							
Management of Objectives						Management of Objectives							
Project-Portfolio Management						Management of Portfolios							
Project-Program Management						Management of Programs							
Project Management						Management of Projects							
Management of Resources						Management of Resources							
© DGHELLC & DLBALLC						TM by PBMconcepts							
Sustainability						Sustainability							

Fig 3: Representation of PBM Framework, Source: (Bolles & Hubbard, 2015)



Fig 2: Pillars of PBM Framework, Source : (Bolles & Hubbard, 2015)

One of the fundamental components of the framework is the structural organization aspect. The component encourages that the PMO is established as a functional unit within the organization. The implication is that the project management undertakings are treated as business functions of the organization although that is not its core competence. The establishment of the PMOs requires a framework that takes into consideration the aspect of governance. Bolles and Hubbard (2015) indicate that governance should incorporate

certain methods focusing on executive oversight, operational engagements, and portfolio management. The aspect of governance is not a one-time undertaking but a component that needs to be applied at different stages of the project execution. It helps in making decisions about policy, resource allocation, and support provision among other things. The other pillar of the framework used in establishing PMOs is known as the structural methodology component. In the methodology aspects, there is a need to identify, standardize, and document the procedures used in project management as well as the fundamental practices of the same

B. Framework as developed by Salameh

Salameh (2014), also, develops some steps that should be followed in the process setting up a PMO. Interestingly, Salameh indicates that the establishment of the PMO should be treated as a project on its own in the very first instance. This is a fundamental phenomenon ignored by Bolles and Hubbard (2015). To that extent, the issues of cost, timing, and scope of the PMO are critical considerations for the management in the process of

setting up the entire unit. The researcher indicates that the stipulation of a charter, the plan to be used in fostering communication, transitional engagements, and the actual execution must be done for the successful establishment of the PMO unit. Salameh introduces something termed as the high-level phases of the PMO creation. The figure below shows the high-level phases as indicated by the Salameh (2014). Looking at the establishment as a comprehensive undertaking that takes into consider various aspects, Salameh narrows down to 12 steps that should be used when setting up this particular office.

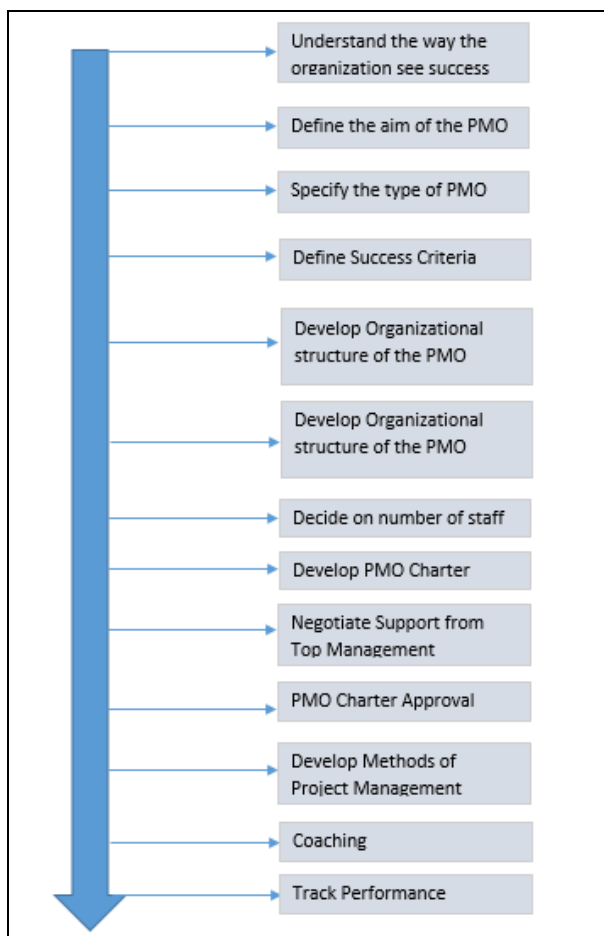


Fig 4: The 12- step process to establish a PMO he Research Design

Step 1: Review the Organization’s Perception of Success: Salameh (2014) indicates that the employees seeking to set up the PMO must first understand how the organization views success. From a critical perspective, this view is entrenched in the definition of success as per the organization. It calls for comprehensive consideration and

evaluation of aspects such as the organizational mission, vision statement, purpose, and objectives among other things. This office establishment has to depart from a preliminary alignment with those objectives. The second stage according to Salameh (2014) is to define the objectives, mission, and vision of the PMO as an independent unit. In this particular case, the PMO has to be treated as a single-stand entity within the organization seeking to achieve the defined broader objectives. However, those objectives have to be broken down into smaller goals specific to the functions of this unit.

Step 2: Define the Model of PMO to Establish: The next step in the establishment of the PMO is to determine the model to be adopted and the functions. In this case, the literature review on the types of the PMO has clearly shown that the functions are at the core of the models. Therefore, this step incorporates undertakings that define the scope of the PMO whereby it can be limited to consultation or given the full authority of managing project portfolios and implementing them.

Step 3: Determine the Organization’s Criteria of Success: This step of PMO establishment, according to Salameh, is to define the success criteria such that the unit can make a determination of whether it has been achieving its objectives as expected or not. In fact, after defining the number of staff required, developing charter, and training, as the other steps among the twelve, contact tracking of the metrics is actually the last step in the establishment process.

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A very few studies are done based on this, and are briefed in this section. [16] pointed out the functions of PMO based on the research conducted in 19 project-based, public firms in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. According to [17], PMO has not get the reach that it should, in UAE organizations. Also the main concern he raised is a lack of flexibility in some of the PMO models adopted in UAE public organizations.

Another study conducted based on the PMO impact in the organizations in UAE, emphasizes on the benefits that the PMO has brought into the public

sector of the UAE[18]. But along with the achievements, the study unfold the key challenges that prevail in the PMO implementation in UAE. The article states that the major factors are politics, change resistance by stakeholders, lack of alignment, inadequate training, insufficient resources and low accountability. It has been summarized that in most of the organizations, PMOs are not considered as independent units, but the political interference affected their operations and thus derailing their optimal performance [19].

A similar study is conducted by [20], in spite of the acceptance of PMO in the public sector organizations in UAE, the project management methods faces many challenges in implementation. The prevalent challenge is considered as risk management practices and it has been mentioned in the report that the lack of proper risk management

practices has largely derailed the effectiveness of success in the organizational projects [20][31][32].

Moreover, a study conducted to determine the dimensional structure of project management identifies factors that contribute to the success rate of projects in UAE [22]. It has been summarized by the researchers that proper risk management, organizational culture, stakeholder approach, management approach and project leadership describes the best project management practices in an organization [22-25]. The article also mentioned that the key challenges that the public sectors faced in UAE are effective leadership and team management practices and hence the need for effective PMO [26]. The report also stated that an efficient implementation of PMO in the organizations could foster increased diligence in project planning, coordination, and control [27].

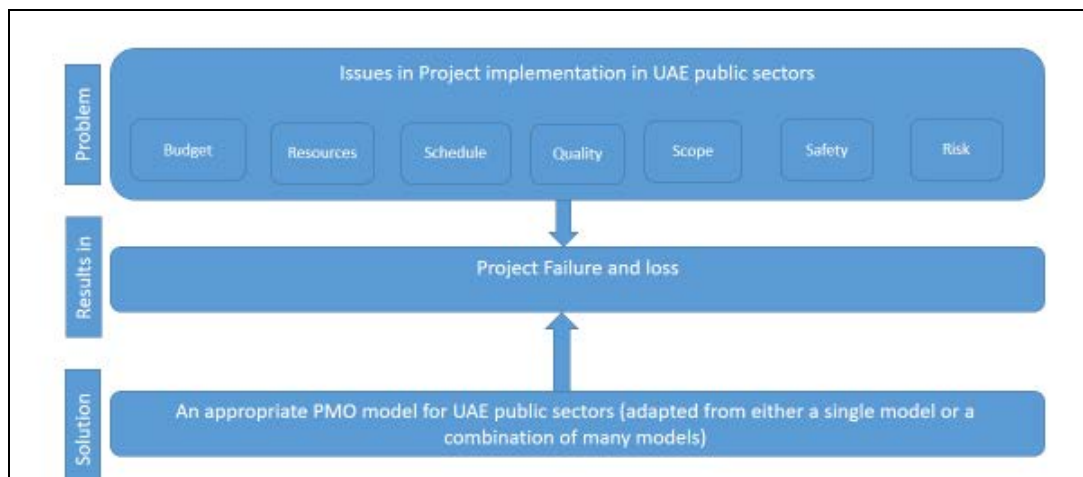


Fig 5: Theoretical Framework in this study

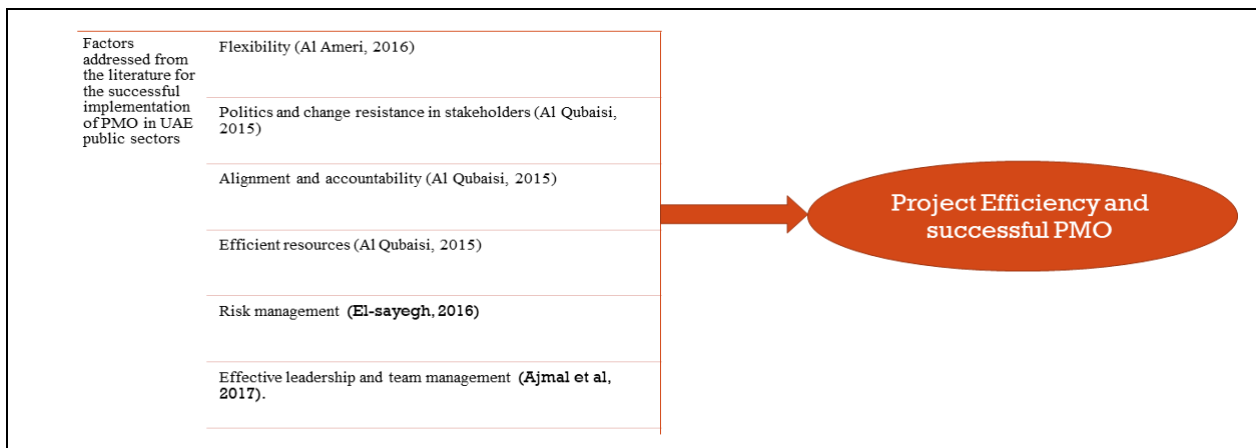


Fig 6: Conceptual Framework

It can be considered that effective management of projects can improve productivity and growth of any organization. Major aspects of a project are budget, resources, schedule, quality, scope, safety and risk. The mismanagement of any of these factors could lead to incompleteness and even to failure of the projects. There are many PMO models proposed by various project management experts and the acceptance of a model is based on the requirements and structure of the organization [28][29][30]. So this research is intended to identify the risks that are prevailing in the current project management practices in UAE and to propose a new model, either from the existing models or a combination of many models. Figure 9 depicts the diagrammatic representation of the theoretical framework of the research.

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